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The Global Turn in Romanian Studies: Identity Reconstruction in Romanian Exile Literature

Abstract: The study investigates the process of identity reconstruction triggered by cultural displacement, where writers navigate the tension between their homeland and adoptive cultures. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of critics such as Ion Simuț, Andrei Terian, and Mihai Iovanel, the article examines different “waves” of Romanian literary presence abroad – from the trauma-induced “rebranding” of figures like Mircea Eliade and E.M. Cioran to the diachronic identity shifts of Petre Dumitriu or multiple identities of Andrei Codrescu. It explores the phenomena of exile and migrant literature, positing that these works are integral components of a national literary system that is increasingly defined by fluid identities rather than strict linguistic or territorial criteria.

Keywords: Identity Reconstruction; Literary Canon; Exile Literature; Transculturalism; Andrei Codrescu; Petru Dumitriu; Multiple Identity.

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Over time, there has been a long debate in literary histories about *Who is a Romanian writer?* Authors that were born in Romania, but write in a different language, or authors that write in Romanian, but live in a different country and also at what age should a person immigrate from Romania to be considered old enough to internalize the culture, language, social norms and different codes of understanding the world. These questions and problematizations were the focus point for Romanian studies, particularly in the context of large-scale migratory movements that followed the fall of communism, movements that had already begun on a smaller scale during the communist period in the form of exile.¹

I proceed from the premise that exile literature and migrant literature constitute integral components of the national literary system, demonstrating that Romanian literature is defined by more fluid boundaries, within which the question of writers' identity calls for analysis across multiple levels. This paradigmatic shift has been marked in literary studies, among other disciplines, by the concept of the Global Turn, which challenges strictly nationalist approaches

to literature and culture. In the context of Romanian literature, this shift has been understood as a process of integration into global literary currents and as an open invitation to inter- and transcultural perspectives. Such openness, however, became possible in Romania only after 1989.

The present study offers a new perspective on the identities of two writers who left Romania during the communist period. Their trajectories can be understood as precursors of a broader paradigmatic transformation, as they questioned the boundaries of national literature through the very conditions of their biographical experience.

Focusing on early cases of multiple identity formation among writers, this study aims to demonstrate that processes of identity reconstruction represent an initial stage in the broader reconfiguration of national literature within a global framework. As transcultural agents, Andrei Codrescu and Petre Dumitriu illustrate that the integration of writers characterized by multiple identities – fictional, cultural, social, and political – into Romanian literature requires a renewed understanding of the very concept of national literature.

The Linguistic Criterion and the Construction of the Literary Canon

It is common knowledge that within the framework of Romanian literary histories from 20th centuries², Romanian literature has conventionally been understood solely as the corpus of texts composed inside the Romanian language. Romanian-born authors who achieved international recognition were excluded from the national literary canon due to nationalist

and isolationist currents in Romanian literary criticism. Notwithstanding their exclusion from the national canon, they emerged as significant figures within the transnational circuits of World Literature. As a result, a new category of writers emerges, attracting the attention of literary criticism. The necessity to differentiate between the cases of these writers has led to the emergence of literary studies that divide the presence of Romanian writers abroad into different stages. Likewise, Andrei Terian posits four Waves of Romanian literary presence in the world.³ His methodological approach is characterized by a systematic classification of authors according to the historical period and literary movement to which they are affiliated. Firstly, Avant-Garde Movement from early 20th-century led by Jewish-Romanian writers like Tristan Tzara, B. Fundoianu, Ilarie Voronca, and Gherasim Luca. The subsequent period is characterized by the activity of Young Generation between the years 1920s–1930s, writers like Mircea Eliade, Eugen Ionescu, and Emil Cioran. In the realm of trauma literature, authors such as Paul Celan, Norman Manea, and Herta Müller represent a distinct group. And ultimately, the comparatist wave was shaped by Romanian scholars who emigrated after World War II, including Basil Munteano, Matei Călinescu, and Marcel Cornis-Pope. The modern standpoint is inclusive and offers an interpretation of these creators as mediators between cultures. The four waves show the diverse identities of the authors: some come from ethnic minority families and adapt to their new country by changing the language they write in; some have only published in a foreign language; some were not perceived by Romanian

culture before immigrating; some preserve the Romanian imaginary, while others intentionally reject it in favour of a more distant approach. The identity of an exile or emigrant is defined by their existence between two languages and cultures, making it arbitrary to separate their work based solely on the language used. Terian's main thesis is that Romanian literature should view itself as a "literature of the world" – a shared cultural asset rather than a national property defined strictly by language.

Mihai Iovanel continues along the same lines of literary analysis following Pascale Cassanova's model and uses Wallerstein's world system to examine the case of the authors named by Terian in the second wave-Young Generation.⁴ His article belongs to a collection of scholarly essays that re-evaluates Romanian literature by shifting the focus from narrow nationalist frameworks to a global perspective. I would like to highlight how the critical reception of writers within my research area has changed due to shifts in cultural boundaries at a global level. We must take it into consideration how transnational exchanges, multilingualism, and cross-cultural influences place Romanian writing into a wider world system.

At the center of the analysis are Mircea Eliade, E.M. Cioran and Eugène Ionesco. They experienced uprootedness that entailed cultural alienation, with a significant impact on their sense of identity. Mihai Iovanel claims that their global fame was not a simple continuation of their Romanian careers but a radical process of cultural rebranding. Building on the concept of rebranding, I contend that it is a lengthy process of identity transformation, whereby authors navigate their position in a new

culture by selecting which aspects of their local identity to abandon. According to the author, the reterritorialization was caused by a problematic political past, such as Eliade and Cioran's links to the far-right or Ionesco's role in the Vichy administrative apparatus.

Drawing on Iovanel's article, this study consequently advances the interpretation that rebranding involves more than previously assumed. Rebranding involves not only literary, fictional, dramaturgical or philosophical creations, but also the reconstruction of self-image. Even if the motivation was the erasure of past political preferences or a genuine change in the image of authorship, moving abroad triggered the rewriting of self-image and questioning one's own identity. This represents a fundamental commonality among authors situated between two cultures. This paper posits that the experience of cultural displacement, both emotionally and physically, precipitates a shift in self-perception.

Identity Reconstruction and Foreignness

Thanks to researchers who have examined Romanian authors who left the country, today we can discuss the topic of self-image. The selection and classification of these authors into groups and periods – along with the key argument of contemporary critics that authors born in Romania who have moved abroad do not abandon Romanian culture, but rather promote it on a global scale – provides a robust theoretical foundation for further research into the experiences of writers. Building on this methodological introduction, the present study contributes to existing discussions

of migration by proposing a new analytical perspective on self-perception when moving abroad.

Among literary critics and historians, Ion Simuț deserves mention for documenting a detailed chronology of postwar Romanian literary exile prior to Andrei Terian. Ion Simuț focuses on the political context that influenced exile and the main factors that determined departure. Although two literary dictionaries preceded his study, they did not consider the socio-political factors that determined writers' departure from their country. As the author himself states "We therefore have no phenomenology of Romanian literary exile, no culturally, politically, and sociologically motivated symptomatology"⁵ Therefore, he made a clear division based on political criteria in the following intervals: 1941-1947, 1948-1964, 1965-1989.

The first division, based on political criteria, falls between 1941 and 1947, when the borders became categorically close. For some authors, Romania's economic and political situation shaped their entire literary work. Realizing that they could never return to Romania, writers of the initial phase of this phenomenon reinvented themselves culturally in their adopted countries. Emil Cioran, Eugen Ionesco, Mircea Eliade, Vintilă Horia, Virgil Gheorgiu integrated so well that they managed to innovate the field of humanistic studies. The theatre of the absurd as pioneered by Ionesco and the history of religions as studied by Eliade represent significant contributions to their respective fields. The process of adapting to a new audience is complex and multifaceted. It involves a variety of factors that challenge self-perception. Changing the language one writes in implies a shift at

the cognitive level. Every use of language incorporates socio-cultural codes that differ, for example, between French and Romanian. For instance, Cioran and Eliade experienced linguistic trauma, and the rupture from their homeland engendered a sense of professional insecurity. In addition, by relinquishing their native language, they discover a new facet of their authorial identity. This argument can be reinforced by the statement made by Mihai Iovănel: Eliade experienced significant anxiety regarding his proficiency; when he began teaching in Paris in 1946, he suspected his French was barely acceptable "even in an elementary school"⁶. For Cioran too, cutting himself off from Romania and, in particular, from the Romanian language was a "traumatic event"⁷. Their positioning within a new cultural space engendered a traumatic affective space wherein free expression was censored by their inability to use the language perfectly. Thus, caught in the position of novices compared to French writers, these great writers were compelled to reconstruct both their self-perception and their identity as cultural creators.

Multiple Identities in Diachronic Terms (Petre Dimitriu) and Synchronic Terms (Andrei Codrescu)

The second period outline by Simuț on political criteria is 1948-1964. This interval is characterized by restrictions becoming insufferable for the populace, while the escalation of punitive measures results in border closures, thereby making exile an unattainable prospect.

In this context, two personalities were the exception, Petre Dumitriu and Andrei Codrescu. They are examples of the few

exceptions that exist— both having a favorable context and an atypical situation. Petru Dumitriu is a controversial exile, whereas Andrei Codrescu left the country under the Ransom of the Jews program⁸. The case of Andrei Codrescu will be discussed extensively in the present study.

Petre Dumitriu authored laudatory works honoring the Romanian Communist Party and never opposed the system. During a period when laudatory texts addressing the regime had become overtly sycophantic propaganda, “they would have preferred, of course, a prose in which party ideology had been more skillfully incorporated, or, even better, was implicit.”⁹ Eugen Negrici observes that Petru Dumitriu rose to meet the new standards in *Drum fără pulbere* [Road without dust](1951).¹⁰ Thanks to his literary prowess, he managed to make the Communist Party’s ideological dreams appear plausible through a prose style rooted in classical realism. As a direct result of this compliance, the Party granted his petition for provisional leave abroad. In light of the repression, arrests, intimidation, and censorship – compounded by the peril threatening any bid for freedom during this era of Sovietization – the crossing of Romania’s borders is depicted thus: “It is a sensational event when writers can leave the country, and this permission is granted only to those who enjoy full trust: the opportunists and propagandists of the communist regime, who had no reason to remain abroad.”¹¹ Petru Dumitriu’s relationship with the literary world and the public is one of the most controversial in the history of Romanian literature. This author is an exemplary case study, illustrating the intricacies of a writer’s representation, as evidenced by a contentious

reception and the subject’s prolific capacity for analysis.

The subject’s public image underwent a shift in relation to each individual who defined him, with each voice contributing to a different aspect of his representation. He lived in Romania, France, and Germany. Some Romanian writers perceived him as a social climber and opportunist, while the Communist Party regarded him as a symbol of Romanian literature.¹² After receiving political asylum abroad, the Communist Party labeled him a traitor and sentenced him to death *in absentia*. However, he would later be perceived by the French public as a luxury dissident who offered detailed descriptions of the totalitarian regime, leading to a shift in his public image. He was exposed by other intellectuals in exile, such as Monica Lovinescu and Virgil Ierunca, as a cunning person with a questionable past.¹³ However, he remained perceived in the field of foreign literature as an elite witness. After 1980, his image underwent a final transformation, retreating under the label of the repentant mystic.¹⁴

One of my thesis is that the extensive list of labels attributed to Petru Dumitriu does not merely represent an evolution of public opinion, but reflects a dramatic change in identity that the author attempted to project at different stages of his life. The successive changes in the author’s life determined a natural order through which he presented his multiple identities diachronically. For Petru Dumitriu, space was not merely a geographical setting, but a determining factor that radically shaped his psyche and, implicitly, his relationship with the self. We can speak of a geography of identity divided into three spaces with distinct symbolic functions: The Space of

Power in Communist Romania, where he held control over his image¹⁵; *The Space of Liberty in the West*, where his self-perception suffered a brutal shock; and *The Interior Space*, where he retreated into meditation towards the end of his life.

Why is political periodization important? It is crucial for understanding that these writers emigrated due to concrete material hardships or fear of repression. They are not bound by a shared literary movement, but by a common need for freedom of expression. The political context in their homeland forced them into a necessary process of self-reinvention in a foreign country. A detailed illustration of identity reconstruction is presented below through the analysis of Andrei Codrescu. It becomes evident that, for these authors, their works are not purely fictional; they represent the effects and traces of estrangement and identity alienation, being rooted in the authors' biographies.

To contextualize Andrei Codrescu's placement within Romanian literature, I refer to Radu Pavel Gheo's discussion regarding national literature as depicted in literary dictionaries and traditional Romanian literary historiography. In the first chapter of his book, Gheo provides a diachronic analysis of Romanian literary histories spanning from 1940 to 1989. Throughout this interval, the common thread binding these works is the definition of national literature boundaries based on four implicit criteria of belonging: linguistic, ethnic, territorial, and cultural.¹⁶ After 1989, this monolithic model of belonging partially dissipated, as openness toward minority ethnic groups remained reticent. According to the traditional criteria Radu Pavel Gheo concludes, Andrei

Codrescu would be excluded from the national literature due to his use of the English language and his Jewish ethnic background (despite his assertions that he was unaware of his Jewish identity until the age of thirteen); but he can be included based on territorial and cultural considerations. Continuing the diachronic presentation of how peripheral authors integrate in literary histories, we can consider Andrei Terian's conclusion from the article cited at the beginning of the study. He suggests that whenever a work involves Romanian linguistic, geographic, ethnic, or cultural identity, it should naturally fall within the sphere of Romanian literary studies.¹⁷ This statement proves that after the 2000s, a total openness was proposed, in which transnational authors could have dual or multiple affiliations in the literary and cultural market. Andrei Codrescu was born in Romania, the imagery used in his writings is Romanian, his first spoken language was Romanian, and until the age of 19, living in Romania, he internalized Romanian traditions, social codes, culture, customs, and patterns of behavior. Nevertheless, this only partially demonstrates his connection to Romanian culture, given that he is also an American writer. All classifications can be simplified and reduced to Ruxandra Cesereanu's description of him as a "multicultural nomad"¹⁸. Andrei Codrescu is a writer whose dual belonging and multilingualism situate him within two cultures.

He was originally from Sibiu and left Romania in 1965, following Nicolae Ceaușescu's plan to reduce the influence of minorities in communist Romania by facilitating their emigration. In several interviews, he has stated that he left the country through a political programme whereby

the Israeli government paid the Romanian communist regime money to allow citizens of Jewish origin to emigrate. This was not a traditional case of political exile, as his emigration was permitted on ethnic grounds. He emigrated to America with his mother, where he made a name for himself. His integration into the American literary scene was gradual, occurring through a natural process of assimilation into his new adoptive culture. Therefore, we can speak of a reconstruction of identity in his case. The local community in America facilitated Andrei Codrescu's integration into his new environment as a Romanian foreigner.

Andrei Codrescu's transition to dual Romanian-American integration is theorized by Victor Neumann as multiple identity.¹⁹ The concept of multiple identity, as advanced by the Romanian historian Victor Neumann, signifies a modern and intercultural approach to cultural and social belonging, in contradistinction to rigid ethnic or nationalist perspectives. The author posits the notion that individuals have the capacity and the imperative to embrace multiple cultural identities, linguistic varieties, and spiritual orientations concurrently, without the necessity of these elements being mutually exclusive. The Romanian historian proposes the term "multiple identity" by studying the case of ethnic minorities in Romania. "By multiple identity, I assumed either the equal acceptance of diverse cultural, linguistic, and religious roots, or the genesis of an identity different from the initial ones, in which case the urban, religious, and social spaces give it a new name."²⁰ Following the observation of parallels in the linguistic and cultural challenges encountered by migrant and exiled writers and ethnic minorities, it

is possible to expand the term's application to encompass writers who have relocated overseas. The central argument of this study is that, upon crossing national borders, writers adopt or form new identities that necessitate close examination.

The clear identities of writers are an indication of their indisputable nationality. Nevertheless, it is submitted that authors who are exiled or migrated become transcultural agents as they adapt and acclimatize to their adopted country. New identities are formed at the intersection of languages, traditions, ways of thinking, and social codes. As Andrei Codrescu asserts in *The Disappearance of the Outside*: The dissolution of the Soviet Union, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the dissolution of the Iron Curtain engendered a questioning of boundaries between inside and outside, which subsequently led to their abolition. In addition to the dissolution of cultural boundaries and the free exchange of artistic products, the collapse of communism also marked an increase in the number of writers transitioning from a peripheral cultural area to a cultural center. Consequently, global political developments exert a direct influence on the dual or multiple affiliations of writers. Immigrant authors who combine and represent multiple cultural influences have their predecessors in terms of alienated identity and questioning of belonging in exiled writers. In both cases, the image these groups project is that of people lost in their attempt to find their place and identity.

In *The Disappearance of the Outside* the author explores the affinity shared by young American writers and himself. Andrei Codrescu elucidates the congruence between the superficial and limited

image that his new compatriots have of Romanians and the libertine, alienated, and self-centered thinking that dominated America in the 1960s. This seemingly incidental connection facilitated a more favorable reception of the young immigrant, who perceives himself as the embodiment of American aspirations.

The advantages of being a literal exile in a culture obsessed by the myth of it are innumerable. What do Americans see when they look at, a Romanian? Three things: Dracula, Eugene Ionesco, and Nadia Comaneci. In other words, sex, the absurd, and gymnastic ability. These three reflect perfectly both the tone and the content of American life at the near-end of the twentieth century. [...] We coincided transcendently: I was the answer to big questions.²¹

The cited passage captures the juncture at which Andrei Codrescu must establish the labels defining his identity. This constitutes the primary marker of a transcultural identity, a positioning between two modes of thought belonging to the country of origin and the adoptive country. Caught between the American superficial vision that mythologizes the image of Romanians and the complexity of Romanian national identity, he identifies an opportunity to leverage the enthusiasm of the American perception. Codrescu realized that the performative amplification of his Romanianness was a productive method of appropriation, acknowledging the forced accentuation of nationality in one of his interviews: “the interest in me of those my age made me become (in play)

supra-Romanian, meta-Romanian, unassimilable Romanian.”²² In this vein, exile is perceived as a fertile space for creation, an ideal locus of freedom of expression. The fascination with exile is elucidated by the desire of his generational peers in Romania for contact with literature untouched by censorship – that literature which engenders a drive for knowledge and exploration, because “Exile was the pure Outside.”²³ The condition of the exile amplifies creative flow to which he is naturally attached. “When I left Romania, the idea of being a writer and the idea of being an exile were synonymous.”²⁴ He discerns in the figure of the exile the correlative of creative genius; suffering constitutes the driving force that engages the writers’ imagination. “In 1965, my mind was permeated by the mystical forces of uprootedness. I wanted to suffer as our great exiled poets had suffered.”²⁵ He posits that the success of the writerly identity is intrinsically linked to the fetishization of suffering. He aestheticizes his marginal status in a literary market eager to receive texts from countries that are peripheral in literary terms.

Furthermore, he sought to inscribe his name among the distinguished list of Romanian authors, invoking a tragic tradition endowed with a mythic function deeply entrenched in the history of Eastern Europe and, implicitly, of Romania: “The myth of exile was imbedded archetypally in our culture. I belong to a country whose main export is geniuses.”²⁶ Exile constitutes a common locus for all writers who have lost or been displaced from their native land; against the backdrop of a void sought to be recuperated, there emerges what Radu Pavel Gheo refer to as identity through absence. Gheo further elucidates

that exile does not signify a definitive rupture from the Motherland or complete homogenization within the adoptive state, but rather a space wherein all of Andrei Codrescu's potentialities are permitted expression. Within this critical framework, one may argue that Andrei Codrescu is an author of multiple identities. Exile allows him to articulate himself artistically *vis-à-vis* the center, while the condition of the exile is creative and constitutive for the cultural evolution of the West. Codrescu underscores the West's dependency on the East and the necessity of imaginary renewal. What becomes of exiled writers once the possibility of return exists? How can they redefine their identity in relation to a country that no longer represents them? The author's answer is deducible from the quote:

The East remains, for me, the totalitarian place where I grew up slanted, the place that defines the terms of my adolescent rebellion, and that of the 1960s. [...] The recent revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe have not eliminated the East of which I speak, which is permanently set in the soul of my generation now conning into power. That East is the mirror in which the West is reflected.²⁷

The condition of Eastern nations is determined by the mechanisms of Western powers. The East has become a space of reflection on Western development. As Codrescu asserts, revolutions (specifically the one of '89 in this context) do not alter or displace the exiles' relationship with their country of origin; the bond defining their identity remains intact irrespective

of political or social vicissitudes, because the East – or, in Codrescu's specific case, Romania – has secured a permanent place within his affective register. The profound discrepancy between East and West is translated at the artistic level into a state of Western alienation: "Not having lost their «real» countries. Western writers seem stuck with alienation, which is a kind of psychological exile afflicting the entire society."²⁸ Codrescu posits that writers from developed, democratic nations do not experience the impotence or the tribulations of writing faced by the exiled author. I would argue that the absence of challenges does not impel them toward an understanding of their own position in the world and, implicitly, of their identity, a consequence of which is a state of errancy. The suffering of estrangement engenders a distinct imaginary from American sensibilities. Immigrants, as peripheral subjects, are capable of generating novelty, whereas Westerners are cognizant of their own passivity and state of amnesia. Consequently, the center is compelled to redefine itself through the creations of newcomers. Exiles are able to write because they have not forfeited their memory; their worlds are not lost. They describe, from an external vantage point, worlds perceived and felt internally, constructing fictional realms rebuilt from the intimacy of memories to which they return affectively.

Such a world of interiority transposed into fiction is constructed within the novel *Casanova in Bohemia* through the character of Casanova. In the text, Casanova is reimagined as an aging librarian residing in a castle. The central narrative thread consists of the seduction and education – both erotic and intellectual – of the servant

girl Laura Brock. During the lessons held within the library, discourses are articulated that resonate with the central themes of Codrescu's *oeuvre*. The most significant debate arises regarding language, specifically when Laura implores her mentor to teach her the language of the Micromegs, a request he declines. On an oneiric plane, the girl associates the desire for knowledge of this new language with corporeality, with the vital pulse of a physical materiality that writes and speaks through the body, the printed text, ink, and the act of rewriting.

I want to speak the right language. I dreamed that the Emperor of Languages flew me to his square house in the sky. [...] He wanted me to meet his wife, Language, who was very beautiful and was wearing a dress made of newspapers. She made me suck her breasts and I got ink all over my tongue. The Emperor then made me write my name with my inky tongue on his belly.²⁹

The characters of the Emperor and his wife function as symbolic transpositions of Codrescu's linguistic integration into America. The citation opens with the premise of a right language, the language the uninitiated servant desires to learn represents the new language of all migrants seeking to assimilate into a new space. Moreover, the ritual of language acquisition via an erotic register parallels Codrescu's own assertion that he recited his first poems in the arms of his lovers in broken English, deciding to transcribe them into text only at their insistence. This underpins the wordplay on "tongue" in the text, a term that holds a dual signification. The

tongue functions simultaneously as a character, a language, and a material organ. The use of homonyms subtly delineates the relationship between the body and discourse. For Codrescu, early literary endeavors were natural impulses of seduction wherein the erotic and linguistic planes interpenetrate for the purpose of creation and knowledge. He confesses to having learned English from young American women, rather than from books. Initiation into language occurred through play; thus, the process of accommodation to the new culture was non-traumatic.

It is possible to interpret Casanova as one of Codrescu's multiple identities, a connection that extends beyond the linguistic register. The character is a reflection of the author's own exilic condition, and like the author, the character is a polyglot. Casanova departs Venice as an exile, attributing a similar status to the city: "In the end, Venice had mirrored his own fate, and was now an exile among nations."³⁰ Transgressing various regions in their capacity as exiles, the two share a linguistic hybridity. Andrei Codrescu writes and speaks in French, German, Italian, Romanian, and Spanish; similarly, in the scene of Casanova's burial at the end of his life, it is noted that "The writer and lover, who spoke in Italian and wrote in French, was buried in German."³¹

The concluding description underscores the irony inherent in the transcultural position: even at the burial, a singular linguistic belonging could not be established. Ultimately, it becomes evident that Casanova functions as the author's alter-ego. He is not merely a character but evolves into a symbol of the shared cultural heritage of Europeans. Consequently, the

final page of the book states that “They were witnessing the burial not only of the Venetian adventurer, but of the eighteenth century.”³² The novel is constructed by Codrescu as a reflection upon Europe and his own multiple identity.

Multiple identity is justified on two distinct planes: through the author’s belonging to two cultures – American and Romanian – into which he integrates simultaneously and homogeneously. On the other hand, Radu Pavel Gheo highlights the nonchalance with which Andrei Codrescu asserts and lays claim to multiple ethnic or cultural labels with the precise aim of diminishing their significance: “assuming them one by one, both biographically and literarily, managing to multiply the entities of the self in a proliferation which, through excessive accumulation, ridicules the very intention of encasing the fluid, protean individuality of the creator within fixed frameworks.”³³ This interplay of assuming multiple identities is also employed in his literary works, which he signs under various pseudonyms; this is done not to conceal himself behind names, but to playfully signal the diversity of his creative styles and the multitude of identities with which he resonates.³⁴ Therefore, through the pseudonyms he uses, Andrei Codrescu synchronically appropriates multiple identities.

Doris Mironescu’s article, which examines the distinction between exterior and interior space in relation to Andrei Codrescu, lends further support to the theory of multiple identities. Tangentially, the author’s assertion that a broader referential exterior is requisite to unlocking the potentiality of a personal interior substantiates the thesis that relocation to

a new country generates a space of tension wherein writers undergo identity reconstruction. “He embraces, then, the «outside» or what is left of it, while knowing full well that it is defined, made possible, and variously enabled – in ways both heartening and troubling – by other spaces, their insides, and insiders, real or so perceived.”³⁵ The multiplicity of a writer’s identities can be overwhelming; however, in the case of Andrei Codrescu, the irony and lack of solemnity with which he presents his alter egos are palpable. From this vantage point, literature serves as a remedy, affording him a creative space that precludes self-seriousness. Doris Mironescu concludes his interior-exterior dialectic by addressing the role of literature in relation to the multiple latencies of the author “literature’s job is to help us evade the multiple «interiors» we are part of without even noticing it and to safeguard those inner sanctums, cultural zones, and existential possibilities we may not be aware of because they lie beyond our horizons”³⁶

Although he wrote exclusively in English upon his arrival in America, following the fall of the communist regime in Romania, he engages in a revitalization of his mother tongue through poetry. The ease with which he traverses cultural and linguistic boundaries is demonstrated by two distinct literary projects: his translation of *Blaga* into English and a volume of poetry written in Romanian in collaboration with Ruxandra Cesereanu.³⁷ Concomitant with the self-translation of the aforementioned volume into English, a process of redefinition occurs, as he recreates himself in both languages. Alexandra Vrânceanu Pagliardini discusses the importance of cultural code-shifting in translation and concludes

that the transcultural status of authors is validated by the capacity for auto-translation. "There is a great difference between having a professional translation done and adapting the content of one's fiction not only to a different linguistic code but also to a different type of society. (...) they became a kind of literary double agent, disseminating the values of their original homeland and also belonging to the larger family of transnational writers."³⁸ Through auto-translation, authors succeed in effacing the artificial distance created by the intervention of a translator, generating a new text in the target language, as they are able to adapt the content for the addressed audience. For Andrei Codrescu, the auto-translation of the volume of poetry attested to his status as a dual literary agent.

Conclusion

The integration of exile and migrant literature into the national canon is a critical imperative for contemporary Romanian literary studies, marking a definitive shift from a monolithic nationalist framework toward a comprehensive global perspective. This inclusion allows for the redefinition of the national literary system as a "literature of the world" defined by fluid boundaries rather than strict territorial or linguistic criteria.

Analysis of these literary phenomena demonstrates that cultural alienation and uprootedness are profound ontological events that radically transform an author's perception of identity. Each writer experiencing displacement undergoes a conceptual crisis in which their status must be renegotiated within a new cultural and social space. This process frequently necessitates a

systematic reconstruction of the self-image to navigate the tension between the homeland and the adoptive culture.

As evidenced by the study of Andrei Codrescu and Petre Dumitriu, the experience of estrangement leads to the development of "multiple identities" and the positioning of the writer as a "transcultural agent" through mechanisms such as linguistic hybridity and auto-translation.

Literary studies have been compelled to adapt to a broader concept of individuality, a development that has led to shifts in the perception and understanding of literature on a global scale, thereby altering the criteria of belonging. The Global Turn is understood in terms of the ways national literatures have opened their doors to a wider integration, in this case, of expatriate authors. The central thesis of this study is that, with relocation to a new space, authors reconstruct their identities – not as dual identities, but as multiple identities. A nuanced contribution to current migration studies is the establishment of a distinction between two categories: diachronic multiple identities and synchronic multiple identities.

The case studies, which focus on the concept of identity as constructed around the authors Petre Dumitriu and Andrei Codrescu, reveal social and psychological transformations for these writers. In the case of Andrei Codrescu, the term identity is approached in a playful manner. By adopting multiple pseudonyms and alter egos, he highlights the global shift in which authors no longer feel constrained by the obligation of belonging to a single culture, as was the case for national writers under communism. As cultural boundaries shift and the author becomes a transcultural

agent, national literature is compelled to integrate hybrid identities.

In the context of social instability under the communist regime, which forced individuals to adapt, the figure of the nationalist writer is no longer applicable in the case of the migrant or exile. Instead, the writer is understood as alienated from the homeland, negotiating his status in the world to forge a new voice that defines his identity.

In contrast to Andrei Codrescu, Petre Dumitriu chameleonicly adapts his attitude and public image. His multiple identities do not arise from a detached playfulness, but from a necessity of survival

in new spaces. Taking full advantage of the political context, he becomes whoever is most convenient for his personal comfort. He is perceived in contradictory ways over a short period, shifting from the emblem of the Communist Party to traitor, from opportunistic writer to witness of the totalitarian regime. Identity adapts to the context depending on the perspective of the observer.

Ultimately, the study of these authors suggests that identity is not forfeited through exile but is instead expanded, creating the necessary framework for understanding multiple identities within a broader global system.

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NOTES

1. On this subject I recommend the article by Iuliu-Marius Morariu. It explicitly fits the concept of political exile into the broader framework of migration studies, as it frames the Romanian exile during the communist era as a “special category of migrants”. Iuliu-Marius Morariu. “A Special Category of Migrants: The Romanian Exile During the Communist Period”. *Transilvania*, no. 10(2021): 15-21.
2. Two prominent twentieth-century examples are Eugen Lovinescu’s *Istoria literaturii române contemporane* [History of Contemporary Romanian Literature] and George Călinescu’s *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent* [History of Romanian Literature from its Origins to the Present].
3. Andrei Terian. „Romanian Literature for the World: A Matter of Property”. *World Literature Studies*, vol. 7, nr. 2, 2015, pp. 3-14
4. Mihai Iovănel. “Temporal Webs of World Literature: Rebranding Games and Global Relevance after the Second World War – Mircea Eliade, E.M. Cioran, Eugène Ionesco.” In *Romanian Literature as World Literature*, edited by Mircea Martin, Christian Moraru, and Andrei Terian, 217-235. New York: Bloomsbury, 2018.
5. Ion Simuț, „Cronologia exilului literar postbelic (I)”, in *România Literară*, 23, 2008 and „Cronologia exilului literar postbelic (II)”, in *România Literară*, 24, 2008, My trans.
6. Florin Țurcanu, *Mircea Eliade, le prisonnier de l’histoire*, Paris : Dé couverte , 2003, apud. Mihai Iovănel, *op.cit.*, p. 221.
7. Mihai Iovănel, *op.cit.*, p.221.
8. The money received by the Romanian state for each ethnic exchange is discussed in: Vitalie Ciobanu, „Nu avem nevoie de autorități care să ne elibereze certificate pentru scris”, interview with Andrei Codrescu, transcribed by Alexandra Druță, in *Contrafort*, nr. 9 (167), september 2008. <https://www.contrafort.md/old/2008/167/1553.html>. Accessed 15 January 2026.
9. Eugen Negrici. *Literatura română sub comunism*. București: Editura Fundației Pro, 2006, p. 32, My trans.
10. On this topic, see also: Doina Jela, “Canalul morții” in *Comunism și represiune în România: istoria tematică a unui fratricid național*, edited by Ruxandra Cesereanu, Iași, Polirom, 2006, p.128.
11. Ion Simuț, *op.cit.*
12. Nicolae Manolescu in *Istoria critică a literaturii române*, Cartea Românească, 2019 analyzes both the aesthetic value of Dumitriu’s work and his political compromises, confirming his privileged status in the 1950s.
13. Monica Lovinescu. *La apa Vavilonului*. București: Humanitas, 1999, She describes in detail the cold reception he received from intellectual circles in Paris.
14. See also Ruxandra Cesereanu, *Călătorie spre centrul infernului. Gulagul în conștiința românească*, Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 1998. Where she also talks about manifestations of mysticism and religion in political prisons
15. For more details about Petru Dumitriu’s life and his role within the Communist Party, see the book: George Pruteanu, *Pactul cu diavolul. Șase zile cu Petru Dumitriu*. București, Albatros, 1995.
16. Radu Pavel Gheo, *Străin în țară străină. Literatura română și granița identitară în proza Hertei Müller și a lui Andrei Codrescu*, Editura Universității de Vest Timișoara, 2017, p. 13, My trans.

17. Andrei Terian, *op.cit.*, p.10.
18. Ruxandra Cesereanu, *Lumi de ficțiune, Lumi de realitate*, Tracus Arte, București, 2022, p. 206, My trans.
19. Victor Neumann, *Perspective comparative asupra filozofiei multiculturale*, in *Caietele Echinox*, vol. I, Ed. Dacia, Cluj, 2001, p.42-56, My trans.
20. *Ibidem*, p. 54.
21. Andrei Codrescu, *The Disappearance of the Outside. A Manifesto for Escape*, Addison-Wasley, New York, 1990, p. 42.
22. Constantin Pricop, „Sensul diferenței a fost cu mine de când m-am născut”, interview with Andrei Codrescu, in *România literară*, nr. 45, 12 noiembrie 1997. Apud. Radu Pavel Gheo, *Străin în țară străină. Literatura română și granița identitară în proza Hertei Müller și a lui Andrei Codrescu*, Editura Universității de Vest, Timișoara, 2017, p. 305.
23. Andrei Codrescu, *The Disappearance of the Outside. A Manifesto for Escape, op.cit.*, p. 37.
24. *Ibidem.*, p.38.
25. *Ibidem.*, p. 39.
26. *Ibidem.*, p. 38.
27. *Ibidem.*, p. 97.
28. *Ibidem.*, p. 92.
29. Andrei Codrescu, *Casanova in Bhoemia*, The Free Press, New York, 2002, p. 243.
30. *Ibidem.*, p. 286.
31. *Ibidem.*, p. 397.
32. *Ibidem.*, p. 297.
33. Gheo, Radu Pavel, *op. cit.*, p. 299.
34. Radu Pavel Gheo, *op. cit.*, p. 300-3002 & p. 304. These pages list all the pseudonyms Andrei Codrescu uses in his writings.
35. Doris Mironescu, „How does exile make space? Contemporary Romanian Émigré Literature and the Worldness of Place: Herta Müller, Andrei Codrescu, Norman Manea” in *Romanian Literature as World Literature*, edited by Mircea Martin, Cristian Moraru and Andrei Terian, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018, p. 289-304, p. 304.
36. *Ibidem.*
37. Andrei Codrescu and Ruxandra Cesereanu. *Forgiven Submarine*. Translated by Andrei Codrescu, Black Widow Press, 2009.
38. Alexandra Vranceanu-Pagliardini, “Transnational Writers and Double Literary History in Communist Romania”. *Volume 3 Discourses on Nations and Identities*, edited by Daniel Syrov, Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2021, p. 399-408. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110642018-030>, Accessed January 15, 2026, p. 402.